(iii) Facilitating contacts between importers from Russia and other CIS countries with Indian tobacco manufacturers and exporters through visits of trade delegations.

(iv) Permitting stock and sales of tobacco in CIS countries and exports on consignment basis against payment in freely convertible currencies.

(v) Encouraging in the Indian exporters to set up offices in CIS countries.

(vi) Opening of 3 additional auction platforms in Andhra Pradesh to facilitate the growers to sell their produce early.

(vii) Persuading the Indian Tobacco Association, Exporters, manufacturers and other Traders to participate actively in the auctions to absorb the tobacco crop produced.

(viii) Negotiating with tobacco trade to declare a Minimum Guarantee price (MGP) for tobacco purchase which is higher than the Minimum Support Price (MSP) announced by the Government.

(ix) Assisting the tobacco trade in obtaining larger quantum of credit from the financial institutions for making purchases of tobacco.

(x) Participating in trade fairs & exhibitions abroad and arranging buyer-seller meet to enhance tobacco exports.

Trade agreements between India and U.K.

2298. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the recent visit of the Prime Minister of U.K. has strengthened the trade between the two countries;

(b) whether it is a fact that number of trade agreements were signed between India and UK; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the extent of trade likely to be strengthened during 1997-98?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) During the recent visit to India of the Prime Minister of U.K. with a delegation of businessmen, joint ventures and agreements between private companies from U.K. and India were signed. These joint ventures and agreements included the sectors of insurance, telecommunications, softwares, engineering goods, marketing of real estate development etc. These interactions between the businessmen on either side is expected to result in greater economic and commercial cooperation.

Legal action against Exporters

2299. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken a decision to drop legal action against exporters for misusing the value-based advanced licensing scheme;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the names of those exporters who were found involved misusing value-based advanced licensing scheme; and

(d) the action Government propose to take against such exporters?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) The Govt. has announced a scheme permitting reversal of MODVAT Credit on 3.1.97 only against a category of exporters who were found to have availed MODVAT credit in contravention of the VBAL Scheme, with 20% interest per annum for the period the MODVAT was retained by the manufacturer exporter and supporting manufacturer of merchant exporter.

(b) Looking to legal and administrative implications of adjudicating a large

number of cases, it was decided to announce the scheme permitting reversal of MODVAT credit to the above said category of exporters.

(c) The number of exporters and amount of revenue loss to the exchequer can be quantified after all the relevant records are scrutinised by the Government and information compiled.

(d) The said category of exporters who availed to reverse MODVAT Credit by 31.3.97 is to be dealt with in accordance with the law. Show cause notices are in the process of being issued against the merchant exporters.

India's Trade with USA

2300. DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 325 given in the Rajya Sabha on 25th February, 1997 and state India's total trade with United States of America in 1994-95 and 1995-96?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): India's total trade with USA during 1994-95 and 1995-96 were of the order of Rs. 24887.93 Crores and Rs. 31262.79 Crores respectively. The statistics of India's exports to and imports from USA for the years 1994-95 and 1995-96 are as follows:

(Values in Rs. Crores)

Year	Exports	Imports	Total Trade
1994-95	15764.32	9123.61	24887.93
1995-96	18457.54	12805.25	31262.79

Source: DGCI&S Calcutta

SC/ST Employees in the Ministry of Commerce

2301. SHRI RAM GOPAL YADAV: SHRI ISH DUTT YADAV:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the SC/ST employees in his Ministry and undertakings under its control get a fair deal in the matter of recruitment;

(b) the total number of officers and staff of these categories alongwith their names and designation and promotion chances; and

(c) the number of vacancies in its control and how long it will take to fill up these vacancies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The total number of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe employees in the Ministry of Commerce and undertakings under its control is 2063 and 558 respectively. Detail of their names and designation is given in the Annexure [*see* Appendix 180, annexure no. 48]. The service conditions including promotion of the Officers of these categories are governed in accordance with the rules/ regulations and instructions issued by the Government from time to time.

(c) The total number of vacancies for SC/ST employees in the Ministry of Commerce and its undertakings is 138. Any time frame to fill vacancies cannot be estimated accurately due to reasons such as responses to recruitment announcements, suspension of recruitment due to economy orders, winding up of some organisations, etc.